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2024 WESTERN CAPE PROTECTED AREAS EXPANSION STRATEGY

Western Cape Government

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CapeNature

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ACRONYMS

CBAs	Critical Biodiversity Areas
CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
CBF	Global Biodiversity Framework
DEA&DP	Department of Environmental Affairs and Development Planning
DFFE	Department of Fisheries, Forestry, and the Environment
DPPA	Declaration of Provincial Protected Areas
DPWI	Department of Public Works and Infrastructure
DRDLR	Department of Rural Development and Land Reform
ESAs	Ecological Support Areas
GCFR	Greater Cape Floristic Region
ICMA	National Environmental Management: Integrated Coastal Management Act
MCAs	Mountain Catchment Areas
METT	Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool
MPAs	Marine Protected Areas
NBSAP	National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan
NEM: PAA	National Environmental Management: Protected Areas Act
NGOs	Non-Government Organisations
NPAES	National Protected Areas Expansion Strategy
PBA	Priority Biodiversity Area
PBSAP	Provincial Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan
RLE	Red List of Threatened Ecosystems
SANBI	South African National Biodiversity Institute
SANParks	South African National Parks
SWSAs	Strategic Water Source Areas
TMF	Table Mountain Fund
WC BSP	Western Cape Biodiversity Spatial Plan
WC PAES	Western Cape Protected Areas Expansion Strategy
WCBA	Western Cape Biodiversity Act
WWF-SA	World-Wide Fund for Nature South Africa

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Western Cape Protected Areas Expansion Strategy Overview

The formal protection of lands and waters as protected areas remains the cornerstone of any biodiversity conservation programme worldwide. Once declared, protected areas are afforded the strongest and most secure level of statutory protection that can be afforded to land under conservation. After declaration, the biodiversity contained within that site can be considered protected from inappropriate land-use, and the sites then contribute to biodiversity targets.

Approximately 18% (2 328 477 hectares) (CapeNature, 2024) of the Western Cape Province is deemed protected in terms of the National Environmental Management: Protected Areas Act (No. 57 of 2003) (NEM: PAA). However, this is only meaningful if appropriate areas are protected, and that protection affords the environment the level of security intended by NEM: PAA.

Historically, protected areas in the Western Cape were predominantly proclaimed in mountainous landscapes with little to no land-use demand. This resulted in an inadequate representation of the highly diverse ecosystems of the province, with a significant bias towards mountain fynbos ecosystems and the near exclusion of lowland ecosystems, within the protected area network. Additionally, only about 40% of the protected areas deemed protected under NEM: PAA, are fully compliant with this legislation. Compliance with NEM: PAA requires that sites are regularised by having an assigned management authority, a described boundary, the verification of continued environmental security, and having an approved protected area management plan.

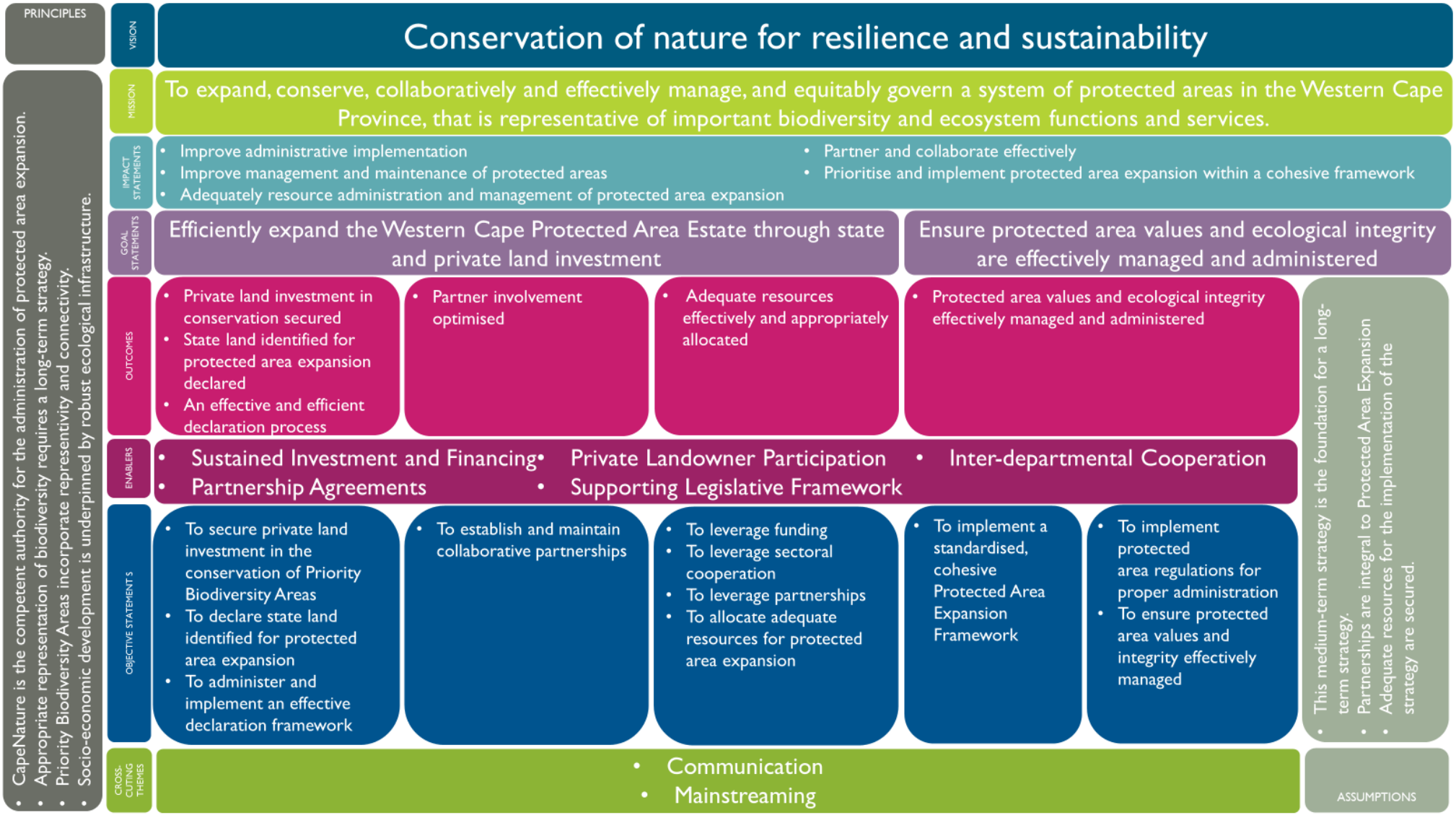
Priority areas for protected area expansion in the Western Cape Province are informed primarily by the Priority Biodiversity Area (PBA) categories, as outlined in the 2023 Western Cape Biodiversity Spatial Plan (2023 WC BSP) (CapeNature, 2023), where both the conservation value of biodiversity and the urgency for protection are considered. Spatial priority areas for focussed landscape-scale protected area expansion are addressed in Protected Areas Expansion Implementation Plans (see Section 5.2.1), where the 2023 WC BSP objectives are matched with the available resources, partners collaboration opportunities, site specific mechanisms for protection and the identification of the appropriate management authorities.

The purpose of this strategy is therefore to guide the expansion, conservation, collaborative and effective management, and equitably governed, network of protected areas in the Western Cape Province, in a manner that results in an appropriate representation of biodiversity and ecosystems, as well as their functions and services.

e-links
NEM: PAA
WC BSP

1.2 Theory of Change

The 2024 Western Cape Protected Areas Expansion Strategy (WC PAES) is guided by a theory of change which shows the outcomes required to meet the strategy's goals and vision.



1.3 Principles of the Western Cape Protected Areas Expansion Strategy

Conservation targets and implementation strategies are defined by the long-term vision for biodiversity conservation in the Western Cape Province. The 2015 to 2025 Provincial Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (PBSAP, 2016) states that: *"By 2040, biodiversity, the natural heritage and ecological infrastructure, is valued, wisely used, conserved and restored and delivers ecosystem services that improve the quality of life for all people of the Western Cape Province".*

To achieve this vision, it is important that collective efforts be directed by a unified set of principles and underpinned by defensible science. Through a Theory of Change process, CapeNature has identified the following set of principles to guide the expansion of the protected area network in the Western Cape.

- **Protected area expansion must occur within Priority Biodiversity Areas.**

  Within the Western Cape Province, Priority Biodiversity Areas are spatially depicted on the 2023 Western Cape Biodiversity Areas Map (CapeNature, 2023). All organisations engaged with natural resource management or protection within the province should align their operations accordingly. The prioritisation of the declaration of Protected Area land parcels that are not Priority Biodiversity Areas or specifically required to meet ecological targets, is discouraged.

- **Representivity.**

  Nationally revised conservation targets have been set per ecosystem type (Skowno and Monyeki, 2021). Ideally, the configuration of areas forming the protected area network should be representative of the full suite of biodiversity contained within Western Cape. The correct siting of protected areas is guided by systematic biodiversity planning and the resulting Priority Biodiversity Area maps. With 100% efficiency (resources and capacity used optimally), and adequate habitat remaining for each ecosystem type, protection of an additional 13.3% of the province is required. The current land-based protected area network amounts to 16.7% of the province.

- **Not all hectares are equal.**

  Not all protected area hectares are equal in importance. Certain ecosystem types have been protected over and above that which is required for the ecosystem to persist. Actively pursuing further protection of already well protected ecosystems, especially at the expense of under protected ecosystems, should not result in the disproportionate representation of ecosystems on protected land in the province. The protection of a hectare of an under-protected ecosystem is far more important than the protection of a hectare in an over-protected ecosystem.

- **Plan for what is needed and align operations accordingly, not vice versa.**

  The targets that have been set in this 2024 to 2029 WC PAES are based on:

  a) Ecological requirements depicted by the biodiversity thresholds (i.e. ecological requirements), and

  b) Multilateral Environmental Agreements.

  These are ambitious targets and require partner support for delivery. Operational support, through financial resourcing, needs to be secured to align multi-partner organisational actions with this strategy. The inverse, i.e., setting targets against a confirmed budget, should be applied in individual organisational Annual Operational Plans.

- **Partner up.**

Successful delivery relies on collaborative partnerships. All partners involved in natural resource protection and management within the Western Cape Province should work together to deliver on these targets. Partners should complement each other to maximize achievements. The Western Cape Biodiversity Stewardship Reference Group is the appropriate forum for the sharing of knowledge, alignment of goals, coordination, and collaboration by the protected area expansion community of practice in the Western Cape Province.

Principle
CapeNature's mandate is to ensure human well-being and the long-term resilience of society and the economy through the conservation of protected areas, biodiversity, ecosystems, ecosystem services and ecological infrastructure. Socio-economic development as a principle is underpinned by enhanced biodiversity conservation, landscape resilience and the development of an equitable and sustainable biodiversity economy.

e-links
CapeNature Annual Performance Plan 2024/25
PBSAP

1.4 Goals and objectives of the Western Cape Protected Areas Expansion Strategy

The goals described here support the purpose of the 2024 WC PAES and CapeNature's vision of Conserving Nature for Resilience and Sustainability (Table 1).

The 2024 WC PAES, succeeding the CapeNature's 2015-2019 WC PAES (CapeNature, 2015), shares the long-term, unique target of protecting 60% of the biodiversity thresholds for all terrestrial ecosystems by the year 2030. In addition, the 2024 strategy aims to protect 10% of the marine environment by the year 2030.

Table 1: Western Cape Protected Areas Expansion Strategy Goals and Objectives

GOAL 1: Efficiently expand the Western Cape Protected Area Estate through state and private land investment	
Objective statement 1	• To secure private land investment in the conservation of Priority Biodiversity Areas • To declare state land identified for protected area expansion. • To administer and implement an effective declaration framework.
Objective statement 2	• To establish and maintain collaborative partnerships
Objective statement 3	• To leverage funding. • To leverage sectoral cooperation. • To leverage partnerships. • To allocate adequate resources for protected area expansion.
GOAL 2: Ensure that protected area values and ecological integrity are protected through effective management and administration	
Objective statement 4	• To implement a standardised, cohesive Protected Area Expansion Framework.
Objective statement 5	• To implement protected area regulations for proper administration. • To ensure protected area values and integrity effectively managed.

The objectives of the strategy are supported by an implementation framework that structures the approach and ensures strategic implementation of protected area expansion by multiple key organisations. The framework guides the development of Protected Areas Expansion Strategy Implementation Plans facilitated by CapeNature in partnership with the relevant key role-players to ensure effective implementation of priorities and the efficient use of available resources through a collaborative approach. Achievement of these objectives is reliant on key enablers such as sustained investment and financing, private landowner participation, partnership agreements and support from national and provincial government departments.

CHAPTER 2: WHY A PROTECTED AREAS EXPANSION STRATEGY?

2.1 Purpose and desired outcome of the Western Cape Protected Areas Expansion Strategy

The Western Cape Biodiversity Act (No. 6 of 2021) (WCBA), recognises the unique biodiversity in the Western Cape, South Africa's international obligations to conserve biodiversity, the province's dependence on ecosystem services, the need for access and benefit sharing, and the need to ensure long-term ecological resilience. The objectives set out in Section 2(g) of the WCBA are aimed at promoting consultation, cooperation, integrated planning, decision-making and management in support of the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, and ecosystem services in the province. To fulfil these objectives, Section 39(1) requires that the Provincial Minister adopts a provincial strategy for the expansion of the provincial protected area network, which sets quantitative targets and recommends mechanisms for expansion.

CapeNature's mandate is to recommend to the Provincial Minister, areas that should be declared provincial protected areas, protected environments, mountain catchment areas or biodiversity stewardship areas according to the Provincial Protected Areas Expansion Strategy, and to promote and enable biodiversity stewardship. This relates to the expansion and management of protected areas as well as biodiversity planning and conservation outside of the protected area network.

The purpose and desired outcome of the WC PAES are aligned with international and national strategic and policy frameworks. Protected areas are central to most local, regional, and global strategies for the conservation of biodiversity (Lockwood *et al*. 2006). Globally, protected areas are essential for conserving the world's biodiversity and contribute to global goals such as the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). The convention is a global legal instrument for the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity and its components and aims to protect biodiversity, support innovation, and ensure the fair sharing of benefits.

South Africa is a signatory to the CBD and adopted Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF), after the 15th Conference of Parties of the CBD in 2022. The republic is committed to expanding and enhancing its conservation areas to the maximum possible within its national capabilities and circumstances.

The GBF targets that have a direct bearing on protected area expansion are:

Target 2: Aims to ensure that by 2030 at least 30 per cent of areas of degraded terrestrial, inland water, and coastal and marine ecosystems are under effective restoration, in order to enhance biodiversity and ecosystem functions and services, ecological integrity and connectivity.

Target 3: Aims to ensure that by 2030, at least 30% of terrestrial, inland water, and coastal and marine areas, especially areas of particular importance for biodiversity and ecosystem functions and services, are effectively conserved and managed. This is achieved through ecologically representative, well-connected, and equitably governed systems of protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures (CBD, 2022).

Target 8: Minimize the impact of climate change and ocean acidification on biodiversity and increase its resilience through mitigation, adaptation, and disaster risk reduction actions, including through nature-based solution and/or ecosystem-based approaches, while minimizing negative and fostering positive impacts of climate action on biodiversity.

Target 12: Significantly increase the area and quality and connectivity of, access to, and benefits from green and blue spaces in urban and densely populated areas sustainably, by mainstreaming the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, and ensure biodiversity-inclusive urban planning, enhancing native biodiversity, ecological connectivity and integrity, and improving human health and well-being and connection to nature and contributing to inclusive and sustainable urbanization and the provision of ecosystem functions and services

This WC PAES is informed by the 2016 National Protected Areas Expansion Strategy (NPAES), which aims "to achieve cost effective protected area expansion for improved ecosystem representation, ecological sustainability and resilience to climate change" (DEA, 2016). The NPAES aligns with the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan 2015-2025 (NBSAP) (SANBI, 2015). The management of biodiversity assets is part of Strategic Objective 1 of the NBSAP, with the development of a representative network of protected and conservation areas as a sub-objective. Implementation of the Business Case for Biodiversity Stewardship (SANBI, 2017) is noted in relation to the contribution of stewardship sites to the expansion of protected areas in provinces.

e-links
CBD
WCBA
NPAES
NBSAP

To achieve the purpose of the WC PAES and obtain the desired outcome, requires the efficient implementation of an administrative framework to secure the investment of private and state land in conservation, the optimal involvement of partners to ensure effective and appropriate allocation of resources, and the effective management and administration of protected area values and ecological integrity.

2.2 The Western Cape Protected Area Network

The province's terrestrial protected area network totalled 2 328 477 ha as of 31 March 2024 (Figure 1). This network consists of areas deemed formally protected in terms of NEM: PAA. The protected area network remains unrepresentative of approximately half of the ecosystems contained within the network. The positioning of new protected areas in the most appropriated areas, based on systematic biodiversity planning and the 2023 WC BSP (CapeNature, 2023), ensures high confidence in achieving and contributing to national representative biodiversity targets in the medium term.

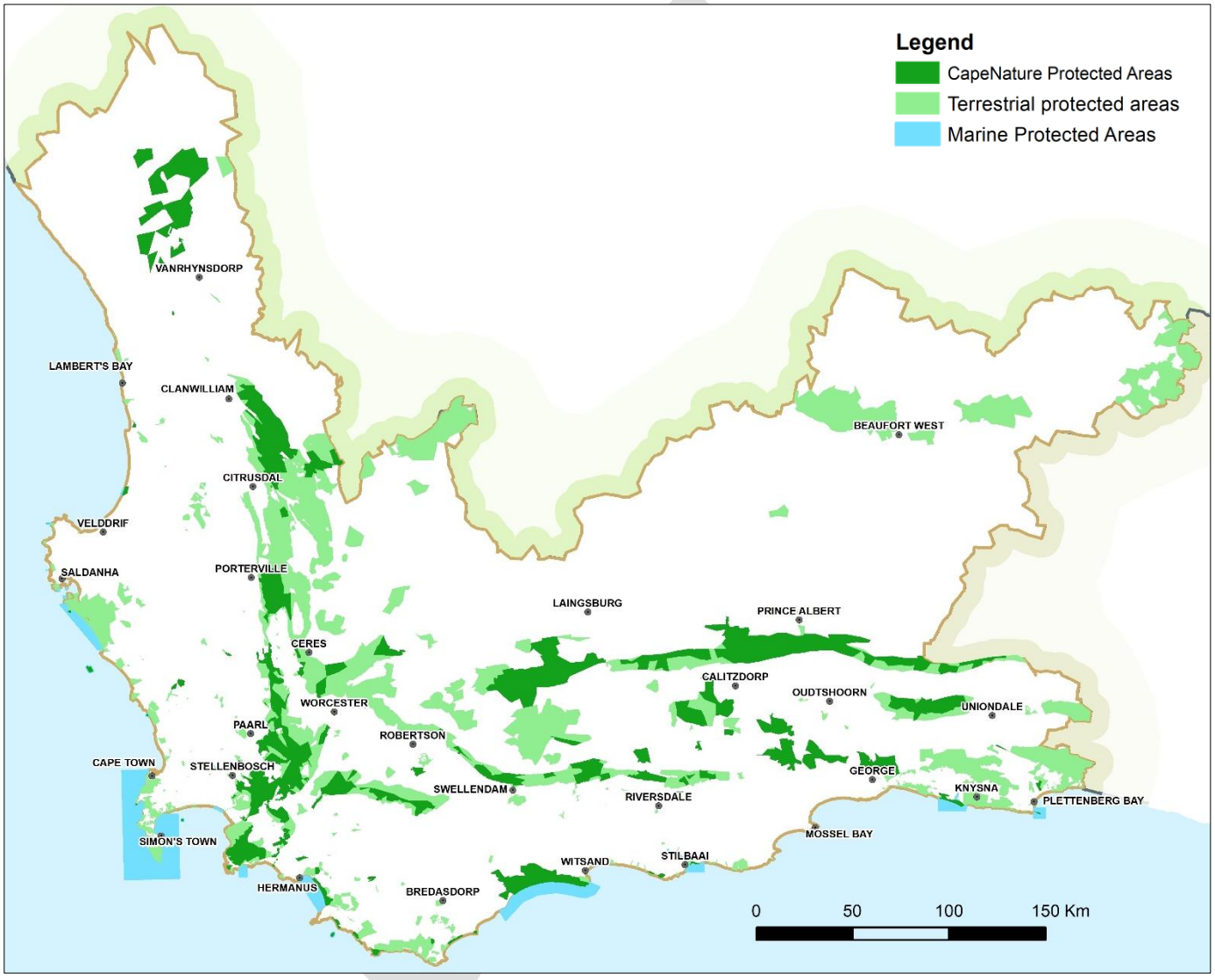
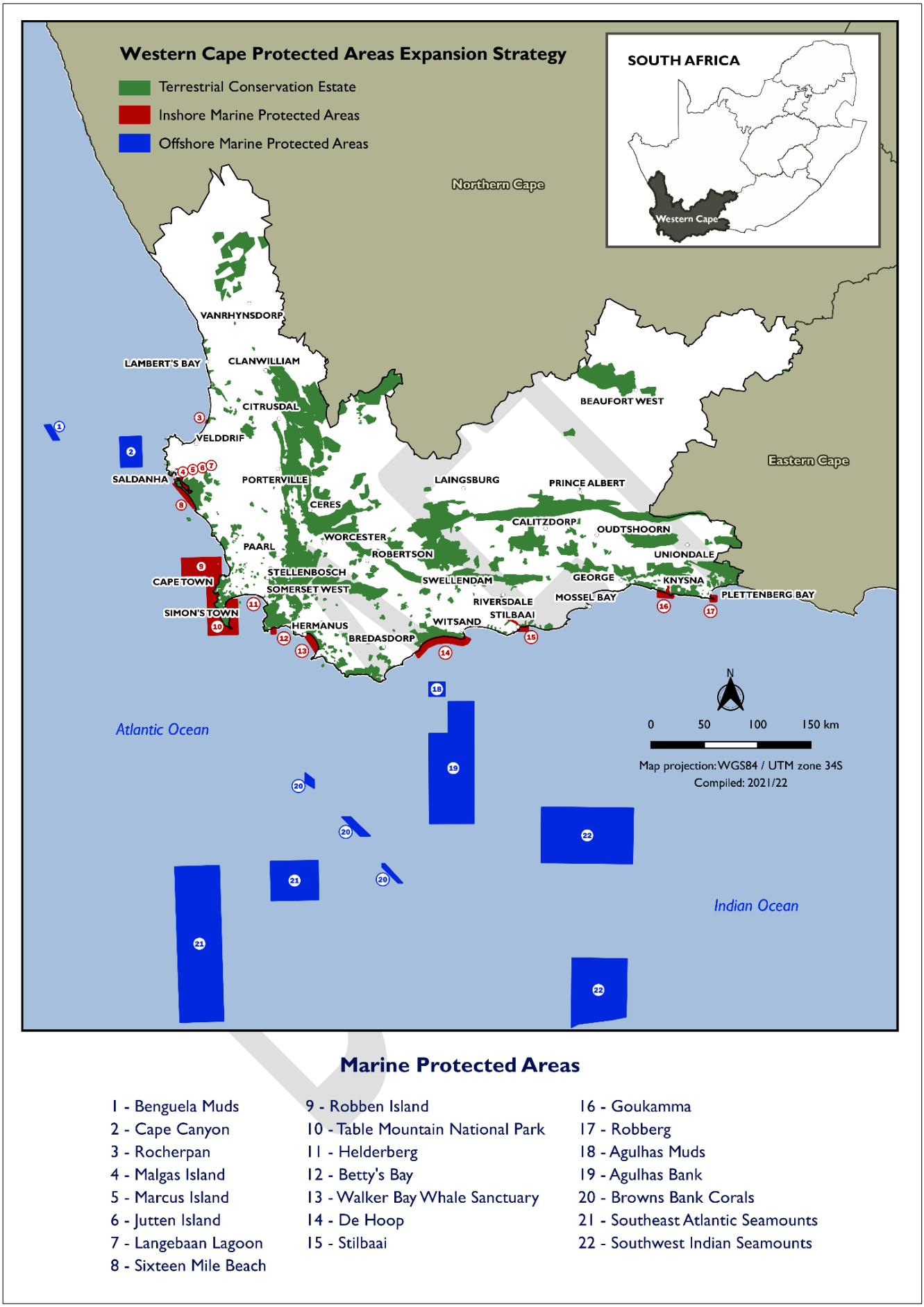


Figure 1: The protected area network of the Western Cape Province as of March 2024.

Inshore Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) currently account for approximately 1 600 km² along the Western Cape coastline. Of the 20 new MPAs declared in 2019, seven are in the waters offshore of the Western Cape provincial coastline and cover approximately 20 819 km² (Figure 2).



Marine Protected Areas

1 - Benguela Muds
2 - Cape Canyon
3 - Rocherpan
4 - Malgas Island
5 - Marcus Island
6 - Jutten Island
7 - Langebaan Lagoon
8 - Sixteen Mile Beach
9 - Robben Island
10 - Table Mountain National Park
11 - Helderberg
12 - Betty's Bay
13 - Walker Bay Whale Sanctuary
14 - De Hoop
15 - Stilbaai
16 - Goukamma
17 - Robberg
18 - Agulhas Muds
19 - Agulhas Bank
20 - Browns Bank Corals
21 - Southeast Atlantic Seamounts
22 - Southwest Indian Seamounts

Figure 2: MPAs of the coast of the Western Cape, South Africa.

2.3 Western Cape Protected Area Targets

2.3.1 Calculating Protected Area Targets

The current identified targets align with the South African NPAES, NEM: PAA, and the CapeNature Strategic Plan 2021–2025 (CapeNature, 2021). The targets contribute to the aim of achieving 60% of the biodiversity threshold for all terrestrial ecosystems and protecting 10% of the marine environment by 2030. The principal aim is to secure a representative and viable proportion of all ecosystems to secure ecosystem persistence and resilience.

The Western Cape Conservation estate comprises 2 328 477.8 ha, (as at end March 2024). This includes all formally protected areas, both signed (in the case of contract nature reserves) and declared. This area also includes Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) and island nature reserves (Table 2).

Table 2: Status quo of the Western Cape Conservation Estate (March 2024)

WESTERN CAPE CONSERVATION ESTATE	HECTARES	% of WC Province
Western Cape Province	**12 942 655**	
Western Cape Conservation Estate (including island and Marine Protected Areas)	**2 328 477**	**18%**
Western Cape Conservation Estate (terrestrial)	**2 166 932**	**16.7%**
CapeNature protected areas (terrestrial)	**784 170**	**6.1%**
CapeNature protected areas (including islands and Marine Protected Areas)	**828 441**	**6.4%**

The current land-based protected area network amounts to 16.7% of the province. To achieve a protected area network which is fully representative of the ecosystems contained within the province, protection of an additional 13.3% of the province is required. This will result in protection of 30% of the province. Protection targets for the 2024-2029 WC PAES are shown in Table 3 and indicate what the minimum mandated requirement is (low road), and what the desired target (high road).

Table 3: Protection level targets for the WC PAES 2024 – 2029.

LEVEL	TARGET	HECTARES	%
Low	CapeNature 5-Year Strategic Plan Target	**25 000**	
High	30% area target	**1 715 864**	**13.3%**

2.3.2 Criteria Driving Protected Area Expansion

Priority Biodiversity Areas within the Western Cape Province are identified through a process of systematic biodiversity planning. The 2023 WC BSP (CapeNature, 2023), a core component of the PBSAP, is used to spatially prioritise conservation actions such as protected area expansion or investment into ecological infrastructure.

The 2023 WC BSP and the accompanying Technical Report (in draft) consists of the Biodiversity Spatial Plan Map of Priority Biodiversity Areas, and contextual information and land-use guidelines that make the most recent and most accurate biodiversity information available for land-use and development planning, environmental assessments and

regulation, and natural resource management (CapeNature, 2023). The BSP Map covers the terrestrial and freshwater components, and major coastal and estuarine habitats, and identifies areas that are important for conserving biodiversity patterns and ecological processes. These are captured in designated Critical Biodiversity Areas (CBAs) and Ecological Support Areas (ESAs).

In the Western Cape, conservation authorities and practitioners have endeavoured to develop a portfolio of expansion priorities that strikes the balance between capturing important and urgent sites, while simultaneously focusing on achieving more specific biodiversity outcomes to help prioritise sites for protected area expansion. Since many sites are both important and urgent for meeting the primary protection target in the Western Cape that are scaled to the provincial context and linked to familiar landscapes, understanding what the strategy needs to, and can, achieve, is more easily accomplished.

All new protected areas must, as a minimum, be comprised of or contain CBAs. This is a fundamental principle of this strategy and an operational parameter for all government departments engaged with resource management and protection within the Western Cape. In addition, the criteria listed below must be considered when selecting sites for protected area expansion, as this will achieve multiple biodiversity outcomes.

Threatened ecosystems:

The South African Red List of Threatened Ecosystems (RLE) was revised and published in terms of National Environmental Management: Biodiversity Act (No. 10 of 2004) on 18 November 2022 (Republic of South Africa, 2022). There are 171 terrestrial ecosystems in the Western Cape, of which 64 are listed as threatened and 25 as Critically Endangered.

Under-protected ecosystems and strategic landscapes:

The provincial protection target has only been met for 44 of the 171 ecosystem types in the Western Cape. To meet outstanding targets, over one million hectares across 116 different terrestrial ecosystem types must still be protected.

Essential habitat for priority species:

Although the provincial protection target is linked to ecosystems, the intent is to protect the full spectrum of animals, plants, ecosystems, and ecological processes that occur in the province, in a layout that conflicts as little as possible with economic development and human livelihoods. Ensuring that species' conservation needs are catered for in the WC PAES is imperative. The following species/groups were prioritized because formal habitat protection is considered essential to their long-term survival in the wild and the current protected area network is inadequate in meeting their specific spatial requirements:

- Cape mountain zebra
- Bontebok
- Riverine rabbit
- Geometric tortoise
- Endemic fish species
- Threatened and unprotected plant species hotspots
- Bird congregation sites
- Endemic butterfly species of conservation concern

Freshwater ecosystems:

Inland wetlands and rivers are predominantly heavily modified and are in poor condition. These components are geographically constrained, and pressures are concentrated. Wetlands are the most threatened of all South Africa's ecosystems and among the least well-protected, despite comprising a relatively small proportion (2.4%) of the landscape (Nel & Driver, 2012).

To address the gaps in the protected area network for freshwater ecosystems, this WC PAES focuses on a suite of systems of specific conservation concern due to their uniqueness, vulnerability, and poor protection status (i.e., representation) such as peat lands, vernal pools embedded in Critically Endangered Renosterveld, the "wet" set of Critically Endangered ecosystem types, and the river systems associated with them, namely: Cape Lowland Alluvial Vegetation, Swartland Alluvium Fynbos, Kouebokkeveld Alluvium Fynbos, and Muscadel Riviere.

In addition to targeting these vegetation types, the WC PAES aims for better designed protected areas that accommodate entire wetlands and river reaches. Freshwater ecosystems represent high-value ecological infrastructure that provides critical ecosystem services such as water purification and flood regulation (Nel & Driver, 2012). Delivery of these services requires protecting whole, functional systems.

Climate change and connectivity corridors:

Establishment of climate change and connectivity corridors was identified as a strategy to reduce the impacts of climate change on biodiversity and ecosystem services in the Western Cape (DEA&DP, 2020). The 2010 WWF-SA Table Mountain Fund (TMF) Climate Change Corridor identification process involved joint initiatives between key conservation agencies and organisations to identify proposed conservation areas as priority corridors. The Dassenberg Coastal Catchment Partnership was such an initiative. The areas identified encompassed some of the most extensive relatively intact Endangered and Critically Endangered lowland habitat within the Western Cape (Pence, 2009).

Strategic Water Source Areas:

Strategic Water Source Areas (SWSAs) are areas such as water catchments, which produce disproportionately greater volumes of water per unit area than other areas. They are generally located in high rainfall areas with a baseflow of at least 11-25mm/annum, which is evidence of a strong link between groundwater and surface flow (Le Maître *et al.* 2018).

Water security is a national priority in South Africa and many SWSAs in South Africa are under protected and poorly managed. Fortunately, most of the provincial nature reserves in the Western Cape are located within SWSAs and have a much higher percentage protection than in the rest of South Africa. In the Western Cape, 52% of the SWSAs are formally protected.

Marine, estuarine, and coastal systems:

In the Western Cape, rivers and estuaries are in a poor condition overall. Approximately 28% of estuarine area, 10% of inland wetland area and 42% of river length are in natural/near natural condition. Approximately 28% of seashore ecosystem types are in a good condition. Marine inner shelf and bay ecosystems (beyond the provincial boundary) are in a particularly poor condition in this region.

Appropriate mechanisms for enhanced protection and management of existing MPAs and island nature reserves (including protected 'rocks') must be pursued and implemented. Mechanisms include MPA re-zoning to increase the proportion of 'no-take' areas and improved management zones for land-based species conservation (seals and gannets) and are aimed at securing key gaps in the protection of provincial coastal habitats and ecological processes.

Management plans for declared MPAs are being developed and implemented. Approximately 24% of the one-kilometre-wide coastal zone is formally protected, but key gaps remain in coastal habitat representation and in some areas, there is inadequate NEM: PAA-compliance (mainly local and private nature reserves). There are also physical gaps between land-ward and seaward protected areas (e.g., admiralty reserve land). There is also a need to increase the extent and level of protection of identified core estuaries within the estuarine functional zone. Most at risk are the Critically Endangered Cool Temperate Predominantly Open estuaries (Van Niekerk *et al*. 2019).

e-links
CapeNature Strategic Plan 2020/25

CHAPTER 3: MECHANISMS FOR PROTECTED AREA EXPANSION

In recent years, the conservation sector has become increasingly creative at finding alternative and more contemporary mechanisms with which to expand the formal protected area network. In the Western Cape, all potential mechanisms will be considered, although the strategy for the next five years focuses on stewardship (both proactive and reactive), the transfer of identified state-owned lands into conservation, and the acquisition of land through conservation Non-Government Organisations (NGOs).

In addition to this, the province will work to effectively and appropriately allocate resources to ensure the environmental security of the protected area network by increasing the proportion which is fully compliant with NEM: PAA, focusing specifically on state land which is currently managed for conservation.

3.1 Private land investment in conservation

3.1.1 Biodiversity Stewardship

Biodiversity stewardship is the practice of effectively managing biodiversity outside of the existing state-managed protected area network. This is achieved by placing the responsibility to conserve biodiversity into the hands of private landowners through a variety of contractual agreements. Biodiversity stewardship is guided by the National Biodiversity Stewardship guideline document (SANBI, 2018), a best practice implementation guide for the protected area expansion community of practice. NGOs play a significant role in implementing biodiversity stewardship, through their support to conservation agencies, private landowners, Communal Property Associations (CPAs) and the occupiers of communal land (SANBI, 2018).

The motivation for adopting biodiversity stewardship as a core strategy for the province is that the most priority (and under-represented) biodiversity is located on private land in the Western Cape. Furthermore, stewardship contracts are widely regarded as one of the most cost-effective and feasible mechanisms for protecting important natural systems across the world (Jackelman *et al.* 2008; Stolton *et al.* 2014), and stewardship makes substantial contributions to protected area expansion (SANBI, 2017). By the end of 2024, 79 protected areas comprising over 120 000 ha, had been declared through the provincial biodiversity stewardship programme, and an additional 62 sites representing over 200 000 ha were in negotiation for protected area declaration. According to the recent value proposition for Biodiversity Stewardship (UNDP, 2022), this mechanism helps to secure South-Africa's valuable ecological infrastructure, which delivers more than R325 billion a year in crucial ecosystem services such as water regulation, tourism, and fertile soils. Biodiversity stewardship also offers economic opportunities in rural areas, creates jobs, and meets multiple national goals, contributing to goals across other sectors, such as water, agriculture, and climate change (UNDP, 2022). However, the declaration of new stewardship sites and the capacity to maintain and audit the accrued sites over time, are impacted by financial and resource constraints linked to decreasing budgets.

All potential new stewardship sites are presented to the Western Cape Stewardship and Protected Area Expansion Review Committee to determine the appropriate stewardship level (Figure 3). The current interest from landowners to protect biodiversity through stewardship potentially exceeds the capacity of CapeNature to manage the stewardship process. Consequently, the focus for the next five years is to further explore the integration of landscape scale conservation to strengthen and expand stewardship partnerships. This landscape approach is implemented by CapeNature to emphasise the move from protected area-centric conservation to bridging division between geographies, jurisdictions, sectors, and cultures to safeguard ecological, cultural, and economic benefits for all.

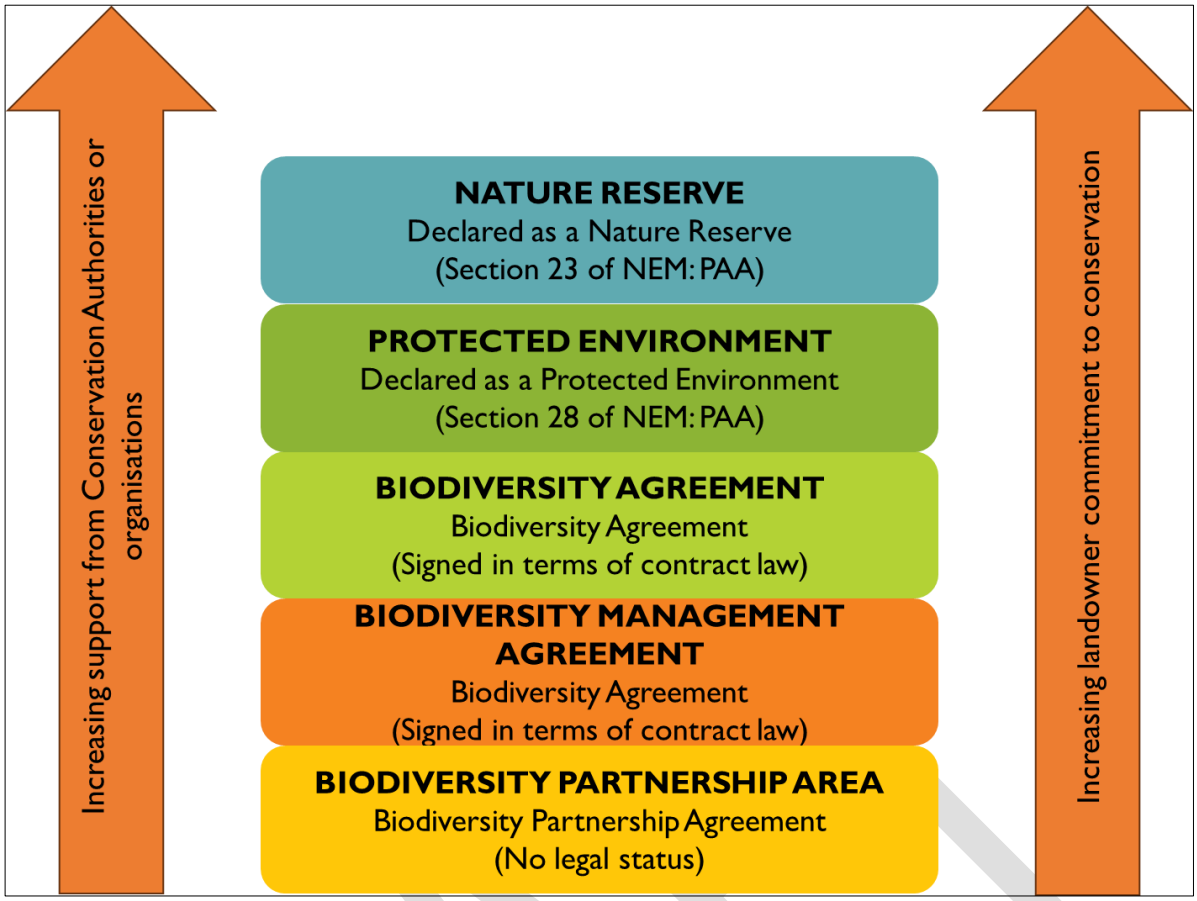


Figure 3: The various stewardship levels assigned to land based on its biodiversity value.

Reactive stewardship has arisen as a complementary approach to proactive stewardship for securing stewardship agreements and can take one of three main forms:

- A landowner approaches the conservation agency to pursue stewardship.
- A landowner applies for environmental authorization to develop parts of their land and stewardship is a condition for acquiring these rights.
- A biodiversity offset is recommended as a remediation measure as part of a National Environmental Management Act S24G process.

The Western Cape Biodiversity Offsets Guideline is being developed. This, together with the National Biodiversity Offset Policy (Government Gazette 48841, Notice No. 3569 of 2022) will guide how biodiversity offsets should be considered in the environmental authorisation processes, to secure priority biodiversity within the Western Cape.

Strategic biodiversity offsets aim to meet offset requirements at a landscape level and set out predefined offset receiving areas. The purpose of a strategic offset is to identify receiving areas in advance and thereby streamline the offset assessment, design, and approval process. If applied correctly, strategic offsets can assist with unlocking development within an area whilst

Stewardship and Land Reform

There are significant potential synergies between stewardship, land reform and rural development. In 2008, a national land reform/communal lands biodiversity stewardship initiative was started by SANBI and the Department of Rural Development and Land Reform (DRDLR), in partnership with provincial conservation agencies, and land and conservation NGOs established the National Biodiversity Stewardship and Land Reform Reference Group. This reference group facilitates resolutions when Protected Area Expansion and Land Claims are in conflict. In the Western Cape, CapeNature has already signed biodiversity agreements for three such sites and new processes are underway to establish Protected Areas with Communal Property Associations.

ensuring the protection of irreplaceable biodiversity and ecological infrastructure. Strategic offsets can provide guidance to developers and to authorities involved with decision-making, but this process does not replace or remove any National Environmental Management Act (No. 107 of 1998) requirements or that of other applicable legislation.

For an offset to be strategic, it needs to meet offset requirements for a multitude of developments within a defined area and not just for individual projects. The concept involves differentiation between areas of high conservation value that should not be developed and should be targeted as offset receiving areas, areas where there may be an option to meet conservation targets elsewhere (areas that may be developed but will require an offset), and areas which may be acceptable for development without triggering an offset.

3.1.2 Securing of Declared Mountain Catchment Areas

Private Mountain Catchment Areas (MCAs), that are formally declared in terms of the Mountain Catchment Areas Act (No. 63 of 1970), provide and augment vital linkages between many protected areas. These linkages are extremely important, particularly for the support of ongoing ecological and evolutionary processes and for their essential role in the production of water. Furthermore, MCAs are recognised by NEM: PAA as a type of protected area for which a management authority does not need to be assigned. The Mountain Catchment Areas Act does stipulate that these MCAs require promulgated regulations limiting development. These regulations have not been developed, and management plans have not been implemented, resulting in MCAs not always being managed for conservation or water security, and the biodiversity and ecosystem services they provide are thus not safeguarded.

The WCBA provides for a legal transition and modernisation mechanism for MCAs. An area ceases to be a mountain catchment area if that area is declared as, or included into, a special nature reserve, national park or nature reserve or part thereof, in terms of Section's 18, 20 or 23 of NEM: PAA.

Through the enabling provisions in the WCBA, the potential of private MCAs to contribute to long-term biodiversity conservation can be unlocked. The Provincial Minister can prescribe specific requirements for the management of MCAs and specific activities that are prohibited in these areas, to ensure that priority biodiversity contained within MCAs is in fact protected and contribute towards the protected area network and ecological infrastructure of the province.

3.1.3 Regularisation of Nature Reserves declared under the Nature Conservation Ordinance (No. 19 of 1974)

Private or local authority nature reserves, which have been established under either national or provincial legislation prior to the operation of the NEM: PAA, are regarded as nature reserves in terms of Section 23 (5) of NEM: PAA. The requirements for establishing nature reserves under the previous legislation are, however, less stringent than the requirements set out in the NEM: PAA. The Act requires:

1) a formally appointed management authority.
2) an approved management plan.
3) the required title deed endorsement as set out in NEM: PAA. As a result, although properties established prior to NEM: PAA are regarded as protected areas, they remain vulnerable to degradation and/or development and are thus targeted for the compliance component of this strategy.

CapeNature has embarked on the process of verifying the legal status of all private nature reserves within the Western Cape. Once the biodiversity value, land-use status, and legal status of private nature reserves within the province have been established, CapeNature will assist landowners of priority areas who wish to fully secure their properties. CapeNature has developed a standard operating procedure outlining how to comply with the three NEM: PAA requirements set out above. CapeNature will provide technical assistance to ensure that a competent management authority is appointed, and that the management plan of the nature reserve is duly approved by the Provincial Minister.

Nature Reserve status can only be withdrawn by way of an application by the landowner of the property or CapeNature to the Provincial Minister. Such applications will be presented to the Stewardship and Protected Area Expansion Review Committee for consideration. An application for withdrawal will only be supported by CapeNature if the biodiversity value is low, and/or if the requirements of a nature reserve in terms of NEM: PAA are no longer met. All existing private nature reserves are currently in a pending state until they are either withdrawn or made NEM: PAA compliant.

3.2 Public or State Land Investment

3.2.1 The transfer of Forest Exit Land to CapeNature for Protected Area Establishment

Unprofitable forestry plantations are being redistributed to alternative land managers for more appropriate land-uses. Such plantations, referred to as forest exit areas, are properties that were previously vested with the Department of Agriculture Forestry and Fisheries (DAFF) and leased to Cape Pine: Forests and Timber Products (Cape Pine). CapeNature has been recognised as a potential land custodian, and formal conservation as one of the appropriate land-uses.

The transfer of forestry exit lands consists of three phases: conversion, rehabilitation, and restoration. Conversion requires the initial clearing of the planted trees to natural vegetation. Rehabilitation is the medium-term act of modifying the area to its eventual desired state. Restoration is the final goal and is achieved when the area has returned to its pre-planting state or another desired conservation endpoint.

CapeNature has assessed the land parcels in the Western Cape Province which Department of Fisheries, Forestry, and the Environment (DFFE) is releasing from forestry. These were assessed based on biodiversity value and whether managing the land could facilitate better overall management of existing and adjacent protected areas. Properties were assigned to one of three categories: (1) properties CapeNature could accept; (2) properties CapeNature could not accept; and (3) properties CapeNature could accept but with additional funds for management.

Properties which CapeNature could accept, regardless of whether additional funds are received, approximate 11 230 ha. Due to the cost implications of managing the land, this portfolio of land was rationalised and the aim that these lands transferred and declared as protected areas within five years. Properties CapeNature could accept but only with additional management funds approximate 1 300 ha.

3.2.2 The vesting of State Lands to CapeNature

Many of the properties currently managed by CapeNature are State Forests that are vested with the national Department of Public Works and Infrastructure (DPWI), the national Department of Agriculture, or the national Department of Land Reform and Rural Development (DLRRD). Since 1994, CapeNature has been administering and managing these areas without the appropriate legal vesting which places the organisation at risk. For example, it is doubtful whether CapeNature would be able to independently institute legal proceedings to remove unlawful non-commercial occupiers or obtain compensation for damage caused by fires negligently started on adjacent land.

There is also a significant risk to CapeNature and the Western Cape Government when managing land as protected areas where this management exceeds the scope of power given to them by law i.e. *ultra vires.* Not only does this preclude CapeNature from accessing certain land tenure rights, but this also precludes other entitlements such as access to municipal rates rebates and tax incentive. It also limits both CapeNature and the Western Cape Government in taking legal action in respect of the land at any given time, as these entities do not possess the necessary right or capacity to bring an action or to appear in a court (*locus standi)* as required by law.

These state forest properties should be vested with the provincial Department of Infrastructure (DI), and their management should be assigned to CapeNature. For the properties to be correctly vested and managed, CapeNature

has embarked on a process, in partnership with the DI, to ensure that all the land is correctly allocated as soon as possible. This is however time-consuming. and require the assistance of various government departments.

To legally declare these areas as protected areas in accordance with NEM: PAA, additional funding is required. CapeNature is currently managing these state forests and wilderness areas with the annual grant funding provided by Provincial Treasury (including Expanded Public Works Programme funding) and National Treasury funding (DFFE: Natural Resource Management). An allocation for tourism development has also been earmarked by the Provincial Treasury, to expand the tourism portfolio. No additional funds are required to manage the land that CapeNature is currently managing, however without an annual increase from Provincial Treasury to compensate for inflation, there is tremendous strain on the current resources available for operations.

3.2.3 Declaring Admiralty Reserves as Protected Areas

Section one of the National Environmental Management: Integrated Coastal Management Act (No. 24 of 2008) (NEM: ICMA), defines admiralty reserves as "any strip of land adjoining the inland side of the high-water mark which, when this Act took effect, was state land reserved or designated on an official plan, deed of grant, title deed or other document evidencing title or land-use rights as 'admiralty reserve', 'government reserve', 'beach reserve', 'coastal forest reserve' or similar reserve". In the Western Cape Province, it is currently unclear how much of the coastline comprises admiralty reserves, but these reserves often effectively form an unprotected gap between coastal protected areas and the actual coastline, marine environment, or Marine Protected Area (MPA).

The original intention of an admiralty reserve is believed to have been for biodiversity conservation, particularly coastal dune vegetation, geomorphological preservation by providing dune stability and ensuring that the natural coastal processes of sand transport and deposition persist in a dynamic coastal zone, and to ensure that the public continue to have access to the beaches (Forse *et al.* 2008). These admiralty reserves are not recognised by NEM: PAA as a type of protected area. However, as independent cadastres running parallel to the coastline, they at times create an unmanaged divide between land-based and marine-based protected areas, which places a substantial burden and risk on the management authorities alongside the admiralty reserves. The aim here is to (a) identify admiralty reserves which are biodiversity priorities and/or are located either side of a protected area; (b) facilitate the transfer of these reserves from the DPWI to alternative legally assigned management authorities; and (c) declare these reserves as Protected Areas in terms of NEM: PAA.

It is important to note that various potential management authorities exist and could include national agencies (e.g., SANParks or DFFE), provincial agencies (e.g., CapeNature), local authorities (where willingness and a competency for biodiversity conservation has been displayed) or even private landowners (in stewardship agreements or private nature reserves).

3.2.4 Declaring Marine Protected Areas and extending No-Take Zones

Operation Phakisa is a national initiative which is aimed at unlocking the economic potential of South Africa's oceans. A component of this project, being led by DFFE, is the formal declaration of priority marine habitats as MPAs. The protection target of Operation Phakisa is to declare 5% (72 000 km^2) of the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) as MPAs. Of the 20 new MPAs declared in 2019, seven are marine offshore area off the Western Cape coastline. The second round of the MPA component of Operation Phakisa aims to secure a further 5%, although this might not be realised before 2025.

To date, Operation Phakisa has not included the protection of any estuaries in the Western Cape. This is a critical gap that needs to be addressed. Revised prioritisation of coastal ecosystems within an expanded network of MPAs is being considered following the National Biodiversity Assessment (NBA, 2018).

In addition to expanding the MPA network, the WC PAES also highlights the need to better protect existing MPAs. There are currently two categories of MPAs, no-take MPAs, and MPAs in which some extraction is permitted. The assignment of extraction rights to MPA zones should be based on the population dynamics and threats to the

underlying marine ecosystems. Although the extension of a 'no-take' zone in an existing MPA does not constitute expansion of the MPA network, it can translate to a higher degree of protection for biodiversity.

3.3 Acquisition of land through NGO's

CapeNature, conservation NGOs and the World-Wide Fund for Nature South Africa (WWF-SA) have worked together in the past to acquire and manage important biodiversity sites in the Western Cape. This is clearly illustrated by the joint CapeNature, WWF-SA and Leslie Hill Succulent Karoo Trust partnership which recently resulted in declaration of the Knersvlakte Nature Reserve.

WWF-SA facilitates the purchase of the land through an appropriate donor or trust. CapeNature then declares the land under NEM: PAA and WWF-SA concurrently assigns CapeNature as the management authority. In some instances, where CapeNature is not financially able to manage the site, alternative arrangements such as co-management agreements are established, where a third party manages the site on behalf of CapeNature.

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Biodiversity Stewardship Value Proposition
National Biodiversity Stewardship Guideline

CHAPTER 4: ADMINISTRATIVE FRAMEWORK

Protected area declaration is undertaken in terms of NEM: PAA, which creates a framework for the declaration and management of protected areas while providing for cooperative governance. NEM: PAA further aims to provide a representative network of protected areas on state, private and communal land. NEM: PAA promotes the sustainable utilisation of protected areas for human benefit without losing the ecological character of the area. NEM: PAA also encourages local community participation in the management of protected areas and aims to balance the relationships between environmental biodiversity, human settlement, and economic development. NEM: PAA therefore establishes the legal platform for biodiversity stewardship and is essential for achieving biodiversity objectives.

Section 9 of NEM: PAA distinguishes between several types of protected areas, namely special nature reserves, national parks, nature reserves, and protected environments. The act also recognises world heritage sites declared in terms of the World Heritage Convention Act (No. 49 of 1999); MPAs in terms of the Marine Living Resources Act (No.18 of 1998) and/or NEM: PAA; specially protected forest areas declared in terms of the National Forests Act (No. 84 of 1998); and MCAs declared in terms of the Mountain Catchment Areas Act (No. 63 of 1970). Protected areas can include privately-owned areas that have been formally declared as national parks, nature reserves or protected environments under NEM: PAA. Local authority nature reserves, private nature reserves and protected environments are regarded as having been declared in terms of NEM: PAA [(Section 12 and 23 (5), and Section 12 and 28(7) relating to protected natural environments established under the Environment Conservation Act (No. 73 of 1989)].

4.1 Efficient Declaration of Protected Areas

A Declaration of Provincial Protected Areas Task Team (DPPA Task Team) has been established to support and improve the effectiveness of protected area declarations and ensure compliance with NEM: PAA. The DPPA Task Team tracks the progress of all declaration submissions made to the Provincial Minister and assists in resolving technical legal challenges experienced during the declaration process. The DPPA Task Team ensures streamlined and effective interactions between CapeNature, the Department of Environmental Affairs and Development Planning, the Department of the Premier's Legal Services, and other relevant stakeholders. The DPPA Task Team provide a platform to constructively contribute to the improvement of processes and functions during the declaration process and to develop efficient protocols and operating procedures.

CHAPTER 5: IMPLEMENTING THE WESTERN CAPE PROTECTED AREAS EXPANSION STRATEGY

5.1 Key partners in Implementing the Western Cape Protected Areas Expansion Strategy

CapeNature is the lead implementing agent for the WC PAES. CapeNature is mandated to function as an implementing agency on behalf of the Provincial Minister of Local Government, Environmental Affairs and Development Planning and delegated the responsibility for biodiversity conservation within the Western Cape, including Protected Area management. This delegation includes biodiversity planning and biodiversity conservation outside protected areas.

As a lead partner of the C.A.P.E. programme, CapeNature began to implement protected area expansion through biodiversity stewardship with private landowners in 2003. In recent years, CapeNature has been supported in the implementation of biodiversity stewardship by a range of conservation NGOs. The increased collaboration with partners has proved to be key in reducing capacity constraints and leveraging funding to expand the protected area estate and provide the necessary support to landowners.

CapeNature will drive most of the objectives contained within this document. These include the transfer and declaration of specific forest exit lands and state lands into formal protected areas, the translation of private nature reserves and local authority nature reserves into NEM: PAA compliant protected areas, and the investigation into admiralty reserves. CapeNature will not lead the declaration process for MPAs but will support DFFE (especially the protected area component of Operation Phakisa) through management when required and whenever such funds are provided.

5.1.1 The Western Cape Department of Environmental Affairs and Development Planning

The Western Cape DEA&DP is responsible for ensuring that the integrity of the natural environment of the Western Cape is maintained and improved. Towards fulfilling this function, DEA&DP has developed a PBSAP. Adopted in March 2016, the PBSAP is a ten-year strategic framework which prioritises and coordinates the collective efforts of DEA&DP and CapeNature, relevant government departments and entities, municipalities, partners, and the local communities. Providing the strategic framework for law reform as well as institutional change management, it aims to ensure that biodiversity and ecological infrastructure in the province is optimally conserved, sustainably utilised and that benefits are equitably shared. The PBSAP responds to the national and provincial economic growth and development strategies and considers international, national, and provincial biodiversity-related policies and laws.

One of the primary mechanisms by which DEA&DP contributes to the expansion of the conservation estate is by regulating development in the province. It is therefore crucial, that as an offset to residual adverse biodiversity impacts of development, DEA&DP contributes to securing priority biodiversity, both formally as protected areas, through partnering with conservation agencies, or informally as conservation areas, through the environmental authorisation processes. In response to this, DEA&DP revised the Provincial Guideline on Biodiversity Offsets in 2016. However, although the guideline is being held in abeyance awaiting the finalisation of the National Biodiversity Offsets Policy Framework and the National Environmental Offsets Policy, it remains the key informant for effecting biodiversity offsets in the province. Offsets, requiring formal declaration through biodiversity stewardship (i.e. reactive stewardship) will be strongly encouraged and once included in an environmental authorisation, will enable

compliance monitoring by DEA&DP. In instances whereby CapeNature is not able to accommodate the site as a nature reserve, CapeNature will recommend that the site be zoned for conservation and that the landowner, as a condition in an environmental authorisation, manage the land for conservation. All such reactive stewardship or rezoning for conservation purposes will be reported on by DEA&DP as their contribution towards safeguarding biodiversity.

In terms of NEM: ICMA, DEA&DP is the designated provincial lead agency for coastal management. One responsibility of the Provincial Minister is to establish coastal management lines. The primary purposes of these lines are to, *inter alia*, protect the coastal protection zone, protect coastal public property and properties along the coast, and preserve the aesthetics of the coast. DEA&DP has undergone a rigorous process to delineate coastal management lines within the Overberg, West Coast and Garden Route District municipal areas, and is currently in the process of developing a mechanism to ensure the appropriate application of coastal management lines in land-use decisions.

5.1.2 The National Department of Forestry, Fisheries, and the Environment (DFFE)

The management and conservation of the marine environment is a national function mandated to DFFE. The Constitution of South Africa, together with NEM: PAA, dictate that MPAs are to be declared by the Minister of this department. The national competency of managing such areas can, however, be contractually assigned to the provinces. As a result, the Western Cape Province cannot drive the declaration of MPAs but can make recommendations to DFFE as to priority areas for declaration. CapeNature can also be contracted by DFFE to manage MPAs.

MPAs were previously declared by DFFE under the Marine Living Resources Act (No. 18 of 1998) and delegated to CapeNature to manage. The declaration and management of MPAs in terms of NEM: PAA and MPAs enables their management in the same way as terrestrial protected areas, i.e., the management authority is assigned in the declaration process by the National Minister.

The DFFE and CapeNature are engaged in formal agreements for the management of:

- Six Marine Protected Areas: De Hoop MPA, Goukamma MPA, Betty's Bay MPA, Robberg MPA, Stilbaai MPA, and Rocherpan MPA.
- Three island nature reserves: Dassen Island Provincial Nature Reserve, Dyer Island Provincial Nature Reserve, and Bird Island: Lamberts Bay Penguin Island Provincial Nature Reserve.
- the Walker Bay Whale Sanctuary.

Towards updating the NPAES, CapeNature will engage DFFE in respect of priority marine and estuarine areas identified through the implementation of the provincial strategy. Priorities are presented and discussed at the national MPA Forum hosted by DFFE. Once priority areas for expansion have been identified, DFFE, in collaboration with its partners, identifies appropriate mechanisms to secure such areas.

5.1.3 South African National Parks

South African National Parks (SANParks) has launched a new initiative to create Mega Living Landscapes (MLLs), which include a mosaic of declared Protected Areas (PAs) and production landscapes outside of protected areas.

MLLs are a reimagining of how to manage and conserve biodiversity on a much greater scale and in a more inclusive manner. Crucially, they acknowledge the interconnectedness between biodiversity protection, climate resilience and the well-being of people. These landscapes will go beyond the traditional approach to protected areas with fences and wild animals. They will recognise that many different activities are happening within large landscapes, and that these can contribute to conservation if managed sustainably.

MLLs are about fostering co-operation between many different partners. They are not predefined areas but, rather, will be able to grow and expand through bottom-up, voluntary processes. Together, the partners in the landscape will work towards the common goal of bringing about ecological sustainability, while also creating social and economic benefits that will enable thriving rural economies. SANParks will play a facilitating role to bring stakeholder together in MLLs and help to remove barriers and support key actions. SANParks recognises CapeNature as the main conservation partner in the Western Cape and both entities will align implementation plans to meet common targets in the most effective and complementary manner possible.

This approach represents a significant step towards achieving sustainable conservation and development goals in South Africa. It represents a commitment to protecting biodiversity while also supporting the well-being of the communities that depend on these landscapes.

The current SANParks protected area expansion focal areas in the Western Cape include the West Coast Corridor, which is a north south corridor that buffers the West Coast National Park and stretches into the Dassenberg Coastal Corridor Partnership (DCCP). DCCP is jointly implemented by the City of Cape Town and CapeNature. These two corridors make up the West Coast Node that forms part of the protected area expansion activities funded through the fifth replenishment of the Global Environment Facility.

5.1.4 WWF-SA

WWF–SA plays a unique role in supporting partners through project development and funding. WWF-SA and CapeNature partner on multiple levels to give effect to protected area expansion in the Western Cape. Under the Sustainable Agriculture division of WWF-SA, CapeNature collaborates with the WWF Conservation Champion Programme in the Western Cape to sign contractual agreements with farmers with the aim of improved biodiversity management on those properties. The Conservation Champion programme currently works across 45 farms covering 47 000 ha, of which 23 500 ha are conservation areas within the fynbos and succulent karoo landscapes.

The WWF-SA Sustainable Agriculture team also manage a water stewardship project, and two catchment coordinators (extension officers) have been placed within CBAs and SWSAs. The Koue Bokkeveld catchment coordinator provides extension support for the newly established Twee Rivieren Nature Reserve in the southern part of the Greater Cederberg Biodiversity Corridor. The Groenland catchment coordinator provides extension support for landowners around the Groenland Conservancy who are part of the Groenland Water Users Association. The extension staff of WWF-SA and CapeNature plan and operate collaboratively in the landscape. WWF-SA is planning to assist CapeNature with the auditing of protected areas and in return, CapeNature will assist WWF-SA with the legal declaration processes.

Through the Leslie Hill Succulent Karoo Trust (LHSKT), WWF-SA provides funding to CapeNature to implement Biodiversity Stewardship Projects in the Little Karoo and the Knersvlakte. For the Knersvlakte project, funding was received to sign four stewardship agreements and to assist with the declaration process for properties purchased through WWF-SA for the expansion of the CapeNature managed Knersvlakte Nature Reserve. The Little Karoo project aims to significantly improve the protection of the flora of the Succulent Karoo through protected area expansion, landscape conservation initiatives and institutional strengthening in the Western Cape.

The WWF-SA Land Programme also partners with CapeNature in supporting the establishment of formal stewardship agreements in the Rooiberg-Breederivier Conservancy. Extension support for improved management of biodiversity features has been facilitated by the employment of a conservancy manager.

Protected Area Implementation Framework

To ensure a strategic approach with multiple partners in the Western Cape, CapeNature has adopted an Implementation Framework that facilitates the integrated implementation of priority stewardship and protected area expansion targets in the province through Landscape Protected Area Expansion Implementation Plans.

5.1.5 The Table Mountain Fund

In 2004, Table Mountain Fund (TMF) created the Stewardship Incentives Fund, which finances incentives for landowners and finances projects that support the rollout of biodiversity stewardship across the Greater Cape Floristic Region (GCFR). TMF develops and supports conservation and research projects that benefit, protect, and promote the natural heritage of GCFR. TMF has identified supporting conservation on private land as one of the key activities with which to secure the GCFR. TMF continues to support biodiversity stewardship on an annual basis, and this is directly linked to incentivising protected area expansion.

5.2 Protected Area Implementation Framework

Recognising that ecological processes take place across landscapes rather than in isolated landscape units, CapeNature is implementing a landscape-scale conservation approach, moving from protected area-centric conservation to bridging divisions between geographies, jurisdictions, sectors, and cultures to safeguard ecological, cultural, and economic benefits for all. This approach strives for a stronger focus on strategic partnerships with key stakeholders such as local municipalities, provincial and national departments, NGOs, other conservation agencies, landowners, and communities. This paradigm also encompasses greater efficiency and effectiveness with limited resources. The landscape-scale approach was informed by the identification of priority biodiversity areas across the province in the 2023 WC BSP (CapeNature, 2023).

To structure the approach and ensure strategic implementation of protected area expansion by multiple key organisations, it was necessary to establish a collaborative partner structure in each landscape. This integrated approach helped to understand the conservation aims of the relevant role-players and allows for the efficient use of available resources. CapeNature facilitated the establishment of a multi-organisational structure (working group or task team) within each landscape and affected an integrated implementation of priority stewardship and protected area expansion targets through a Landscape PAES Implementation Plans.

5.2.1 Landscape PAES Implementation Plans

Landscape PAES Implementation Plans form the foundation for the implementation of the WC PAES. They provide clear guidance on how to integrate and co-ordinate stewardship and protected area expansion efforts in a landscape. They provide an overview of partners operational in a landscape, describe the detailed priority actions necessary (where, when and by whom), and resources required to meet the objectives of the WC PAES. Implementation Plans are updated annually and submitted for approval by the CapeNature Executive.

5.3 Protected Area Management Effectiveness and Administration

The regulations for the Proper Administration of Protected Areas, published under section 86(i) of the NEM: PAA (Government Notice 99 of 2012), provide rules for the administration and management of nature reserves and their natural resources. These regulations are, unless specified otherwise, applicable to all nature reserves. The regulations also set out functions and powers of management authorities in respect of nature reserves. Compliance with regulations contributes to improved management practices that protect biodiversity.

Protected Area Management Effectiveness (PAME) refers to how well protected areas are being managed and the extent to which management is protecting the values and ecological integrity of a protected area, and achieving its goals and objectives (IUCN WCPA, 2006). To assess and monitor PAME, the Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool (METT) is used. The METT was first published in 2002 to reflect the IUCN World Commission on Protected Areas Framework for PAME. The METT serves as generic system for assessing the management effectiveness of protected areas globally and helps to evaluate how well protected areas are meeting their conservation goals and objectives. South Africa has adopted the METT-SA, which is now integrated into the strategic planning of the conservation sector and applied to all state-managed protected areas, including national parks and nature reserves.

CapeNature completes biennial METT assessments. The process focusses on various aspects of protected area management including governance, conservation outcomes, and financial sustainability. The systematic evaluation of these factors and the development of a METT report will ensure that the requirements for reporting in terms of the Norms and Standards for the Management of Protected Areas in South Africa are met.

Private landowners in the Western Cape can also derive several benefits from using the METT to assess and enhance the management of their conservation areas. These include improved conservation outcomes, informed decision making, access to resources and partnerships, and contributing to the broader conservation objectives in the landscape. The adoption and implementation of management effectiveness tools on private land provide learning opportunities through peer exchanges, workshops, and best practice sharing, and this enhances the capability and responsibility of private landowners to manage their protected area. It also presents an opportunity for CapeNature and other stewardship practitioners to provide post declaration support that is meaningful, fosters trust, promotes collaboration, and shares conservation goals.

CapeNature is committed to its legislative mandate for the proper administration of protected areas, development, and the implementation of management plans. This ensures the long-term sustainability of protected areas and the well-being of local communities. The National Biodiversity Stewardship Guideline Document speaks to the process for overseeing and reporting for Biodiversity Stewardship sites. If this process is followed, it will meet the reporting requirements of the Regulations for the Proper Administration of Nature Reserves.

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Regulations for the Proper Administration of Protected Areas

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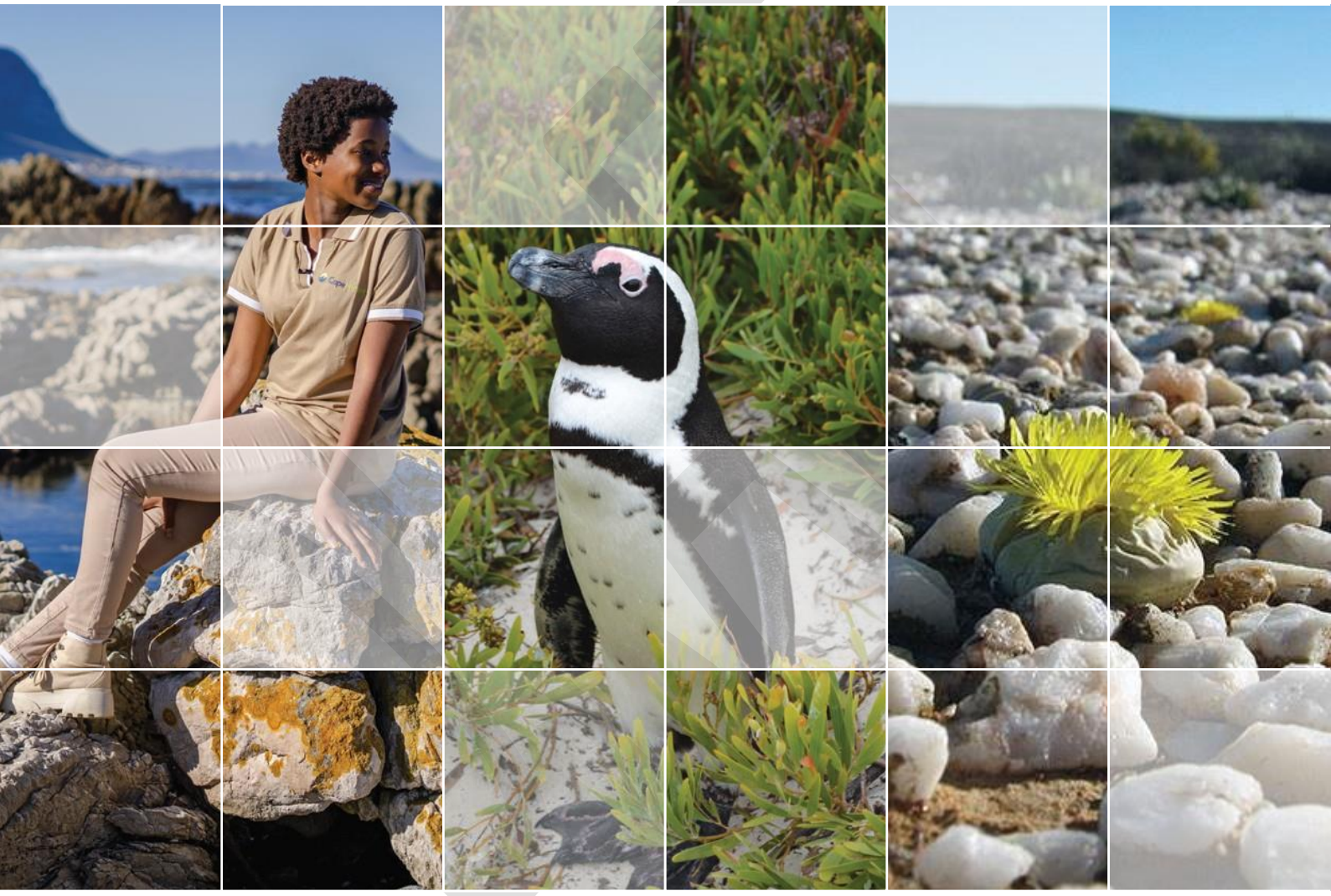

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